



Friday, June 6, 2003

Contact: Lori Getter, Wisconsin Emergency Management, 608-242-3239

Jessica Erickson, Governor's Office, 608-261-2156

Governor Orders State of Emergency for Shell Lake Area

Governor Jim Doyle has declared a State of Emergency for the Shell Lake area in Washburn County. The lake continues to rise to an all-time high, impacting over 100 homes along the shoreline.

"A few weeks ago, I visited Shell Lake and saw the damage caused by the high lake waters to area homes," Governor Doyle said. "I understand the frustrations of homeowners and local officials as this problem has plagued this community for the past few years. Unfortunately there are no quick fixes, but we will do all that we can to provide assistance."

The Governor offered praise for Senator Bob Jauch (D-Poplar) and Representative Mary Hubler (D-Rice Lake) for their tireless work with local and state officials to find a resolution to this long-standing problem.

"The citizens of Shell Lake are fortunate to Senator Jauch and Representative Hubler working on their behalf," Doyle said. "I look forward to a continued partnership with Senator Jauch, Representative Hubler and local officials to benefit the people of Shell Lake."

The State of Emergency directs all state agencies to assist Shell Lake in responding to the flooding situation. The Governor has directed Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) Director Ed Gleason to coordinate the state's efforts.

Over the past several weeks, WEM has been in discussions with the federal agencies such as Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is working with other state agencies to identify additional resources and aid.

With this declaration, Governor Doyle has instructed state agencies to continue the work they have provided to date and to explore additional options to assist the Shell Lake community. Efforts include:

- Awarding \$10,000 Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Agency Disaster Relief Grant to the City of Shell Lake for general disaster and housing assistance.

- MORE -

- Identifying financing options and low interest loans to assist with the permanent repairs to the 4.4 mile pipeline diversion project that was designed to provide long term resolution to the high water levels. Last summer, the City of Shell Lake approved construction of a pipeline to discharge water from Shell Lake into the Yellow River to help lower lake water levels. The system has not been operational due to leaks and short-term repairs are currently underway. The state financing could help with the long-term repairs that were proposed in a recently completed engineering review.
- Assisting the City in establishing eligibility for up to \$2 million in low-interest loans to acquire homes most adversely affected to allow those residents to relocate if desired.
- Making available Department of Administration housing assistance grants for up to \$25,000 for low-income families who have been affected by the flooding.
- Providing assistance to the City of Shell Lake in obtaining emergency grants under the federal Community Development Block Grant Program. The city can apply for up to \$500,000 to address low and moderate-income housing needs caused by flooding.
- Continuing Department of Natural Resources technical oversight of the diversion project and remaining committed to ensuring that water quality standards are monitored.
- Providing correctional inmates to fill sandbags.
- At the Governor's direction, Wisconsin Emergency Management will be meeting next week with federal and state agencies to identify additional options and funding sources.

These efforts under today's declaration will augment earlier efforts by the state. Wisconsin Emergency Management has provided funding for engineering study of the diversion project, funded the relocation of a shelter house at the public campground, and at Governor Doyle's direction supplied more than 225,000 sandbags to Shell Lake.

In the last 50 years, the elevation of Shell Lake has risen 9 feet. The high water levels are flooding homes and causing problems to infrastructure around the lake including roads and the sanitary system.